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that attention of the will, and that large faith in the overshadowing presence of a God of wisdom and of truth which is the spirit of science at its best. The preacher who has put this to the proof in his own experience will no longer be afraid of the new theology. On the contrary, he will

welcome it as an indispensable ally in the supreme task to which his life is given, the preaching of the gospel of that living Christ who is the spring of all progress and the goal of all endeavor, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

OUR SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE IN THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION

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The great doctrines of historic Christianity may become to us, their heirs, either a liability or an asset, according to the way in which we treat them and the categories under which we place them in our attempts to determine the status of Christianity in our modern world. If we treat them as finally authoritative formulae of the ultimate composition of truth, or even as hard-and-fast rails on which the wheels of our thought must closely run in order to reach its destination without disaster, then every thoughtful modern man who knows and shares the spirit of his time must reckon them as intellectual liabilities for which no counterbalancing amounts of personal piety, ecclesiastical dignity, or fervor of assertion can entirely compensate. But if, on the other hand, we regard them (to borrow the fine figure of a distinguished bishop who is himself an inspiring leader of the modern church militant) as watchwords, or better still, as ancient and trium-

phant battle-flags, in Christianity's age-long warfare against error and wrong and sin; if we follow them, not as set rails, but as broad highways for Christian progress, indicating not so much a prescribed path as the general direction to be pursued, where necessary over roads roughly parallel, by the entire advancing army, and promising an ultimate attainment of its common goal—then they are clearly to be reckoned as spiritual assets of our modern Christianity whose religious value we have hardly begun to realize or appreciate.

This is notably true of these customs, traditions, and teachings which through the centuries have gathered around the Christmas season. Whatever the origin of the Christmas customs which we still so universally keep, we recognize them, in spite of occasional exaggerations, as beautiful and appropriate expressions of the Christmas spirit of peace and goodwill toward men. Whatever historical criticism may finally decide about the

accuracy of the stories that are forever at the heart of the Christmas tradition, we shall certainly continue to tell those stories to our children as our fathers told them to us, for they are a precious part of our spiritual inheritance, and an expression at once exquisitely simple, profoundly significant, and irresistibly moving, of Christian truth. And so is it most of all with that great and central doctrine of Christian history and experience alike, of which Christmas is the appropriate annual festival—the doctrine of the incarnation. To every Christian whose mind is reverently open and whose soul is eagerly expansive, each recurring Christmas ought to bring a deepening realization of “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,” to whom it has been individually revealed through the centuries, to each in his own tongue, “that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.”

That this central Christian doctrine may become an intellectual liability when attempts are made to compress it into a comprehensive formula, and then to prescribe that formula as a convincing answer to the questions of that multitude of serious- and open-minded persons who in our time are asking what they shall think of Christ, is frequently and sometimes sadly evident. Many of us have seen students in our universities and thoughtful men and women in our best communities, whose hearts and wills had answered gladly to the call of Christ to follow him, halted and perplexed on the threshold of entrance into the Christian organization of the college or the church of the community, and sometimes turned back

altogether, by the forcing on them of some question that ought to be subsequent but is all too often made previous, as to the orthodoxy of their theory of the incarnation. Jesus put to his disciples the crucial question, “Whom say ye that I am?” not at the beginning of their discipleship, when he summoned them simply to follow and obey him as Master, but well toward the end of his ministry when they had been a long time with him and knew him intimately; when the deeper truths concerning his mission and his person had been revealed to them, not through any theological instruction or prescription from “flesh and blood,” but through a direct and personal spiritual insight granted to them by his “Father who is in heaven.” So and so only does a vital personal faith in Christ’s divinity come to any human soul. And only as we approach and interpret the doctrine of the incarnation through this, its experimental source and spring, can we realize or appreciate its spiritual heritage as it has been transmitted to us by the hands of those who have themselves discovered its rich treasures.

Our inheritance of the doctrine of the incarnation may prove to be, not simply an intellectual liability if we insist on prescribing it as a theory whose acceptance is essential to beginning the Christian life, but actually a spiritual liability as well, if we allow it to come, like some opaque veil, between us and “the face of Jesus Christ,” in which there shines ever for us “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.” To one whose faith in the lordship of Jesus is a personal bond that involves absolute spiritual authority on the part

of the Master and utter loyalty and obedience on the part of the disciple, all that the modern study of the life and character and consciousness of Jesus can reveal will be not simply innocuous, but positively welcome. The more clearly all scholarly research can reveal his human face, the more brightly do we believe that the divine light will shine forth in and from it. And when we remember how often abstract theories of the incarnation have shown us only a "pale Christ of dogma, stalking across the pages of history with a contract in his hand," we may well rejoice that in our time the face and figure of Jesus of Nazareth stand out more vividly against the contrasting background of his age and race and country than perhaps to any other generation since his contemporaries. Or if, again, our doctrine of the incarnation implies a *deus ex machina* which lifts the life and personality of Jesus out of real contact and relation with our ordinary human lives and their needs, and establishes his divinity only by isolating him into a hopelessly inaccessible and therefore practically unreal order of being, then, as another great bishop of another great church loves to insist, our theological theory has taken away from us with one hand all the possibilities of Christlikeness which it seemed to hold out to us with the other.

I

How then can we enter into the fullness of the great inheritance which this historic doctrine of the incarnation holds for those who know how to appropriate its riches as spiritual assets for their own thought and experience? First

and foremost, we must become better acquainted with "the man Christ Jesus." All the profundities and cosmic consequences which the Christian centuries have developed in the doctrine of the incarnation root themselves in, and rest upon, the character and personality of him who in Galilee nineteen centuries ago "went about doing good." Only he who knows intimately through constant study and spiritual association the Jesus of history can truly understand or value the Christ of faith.

Again, we must learn to distinguish between the outer forms of the traditional Christologies of Christian history, which forms are chiefly intellectual and shaped by the prevailing cosmologies and philosophies of the period, and their spiritual content or experimental basis, which is essentially religious, and usually indicates some vital or important element which our own view of the person of Christ must conserve. Harnack once gave to one of his classes a beautiful illustration of such intellectual discrimination and spiritual perspective. He told of a conversation on church history which he had once had with the great scientist Helmholtz, in which the latter remarked that it had always seemed to him most unfortunate for later Christian history that the Arian Christology was rejected at Nicaea. Harnack at once replied that he did not at all think so; that while as a modern thinker he did not find the Athanasian formulae either satisfactory or accurate, he would have supported them heartily as against Arius had he been at Nicaea; and that he could not but regard it as highly fortunate for later Christian history that the views of Athanasius pre-

veiled, because they had kept vital and central in historic Christianity the belief and experience that through Christ men could come into personal contact with the real and living God himself. In estimating the truth and value of any of the great Christologies of Christian history, we must distinguish thus sharply between their contemporary form and their permanently valuable content, and treat the latter rather than the former as the true and precious heritage into which we seek to enter.

Finally, we must remember that our own insight into "the truth as it is in Jesus," our own knowledge of him, and our own experience of his saving power are but partial and inadequate; and that they must be enlarged and completed by what other individuals and other ages as well have discovered, and in the directions which their experience points out. From this point of view the great Christologies of Christian history became as it were stern anchors to keep us adventurous moderns from being "carried about with every wind of doctrine," working charts to guide us across the mysterious sea of religious experience, provisional maps to aid us in the experimental exploration of the vast continent of Christian truth. And we who are "forward-looking men" in our religion, who believe that new light on the problems of human life and destiny and on the character of God must shine forth more and more radiantly from the face of Jesus Christ as we see that face more and more clearly, will constantly find foregleams of that new light in these historic formulations of our abiding faith in the incarnation, and will esteem that faith as a spiritual

heritage which every new discovery within it makes more precious.

II

What now are some of the outstanding elements in our spiritual inheritance in the doctrine of the incarnation, of which we should remind ourselves and seek a deeper realization as Christmas comes round again? To what great essentials of Christian faith and experience do the Christologies of the centuries, under all their changing and various outer formulations, bear common witness? It need hardly be said that no article, no author, no age even, can presume to give an adequate and exhaustive answer to so great a question. But there are certain points indispensable to any true answer, which must present themselves to the mind and heart of any thoughtful modern Christian with a historic sense and a docile spirit; and it is the hope of this article merely to suggest some of these.

First, *Jesus Christ makes visible to us in human history, and accessible to us in personal experience, the presence and power of the living God.* We look at him who appeared in Galilee nineteen centuries ago as the Herald and Founder of the kingdom of God on earth; we see him deserted by his friends, and thwarted and finally slain by his enemies; we behold him triumphant over death and the grave, and we find his followers advancing to greater victories over the world under his continuous spiritual leadership than ever they or even he had won during his earthly lifetime; we watch through the centuries since, and notably in our own time, his cause and kingdom steadily gaining, in spite

of ridicule and argument alike, in spite of the huge inertia of ignorance and the settled opposition of evil, throughout the earth: and in this life and influence and abiding spiritual presence we have the clearest evidence which history affords or needs, of the presence and power in human life of his "Father, Lord of heaven and earth."

And yet again: when in our individual perplexity and weakness and sin and uttermost need we modern men turn to him, even as our fathers did, for light on the problems of life and destiny, and strength to follow where he leads the way, we find in him not only a convincing spiritual authority which can speak to our troubled souls his timeless words of assurance and of peace; we find also, in contact and companionship with his personality as revealed in and through the gospels, a personal experience of a saving power on which we are persuaded we can rely to deliver and save our souls here and hereafter, and which we can recognize and identify only as the presence and power, working in and through him, of the living God. It is this observation of the place of Jesus in human history, and this experience of his power in our personal lives, that is one root and source of our Christian belief in the divinity of Christ.

The other root and source of that faith is the discovery of Christian experience that *in the character of Jesus we have an adequate and satisfying revelation of the character of the God whom he declared to be his Father*. Let us note well that apparently this was not so much a personal claim of Jesus himself, as it has been the continuous discovery of his followers since. It is

evident from the Gospels that he recognized that there were certain things which he did not know and which he could not do, and that he deliberately sought to direct men beyond himself to God as the ultimate ideal of personal character. It has been made plain also by modern scholarship that Jesus' life was lived under the conditions and within the limitations of his time, and that he shared the current ideas of his age at many points. But neither of these modern recognitions affects or modifies in the slightest the continuous discovery of Christian experience that in the character of Jesus we have an adequate and satisfying revelation of the character of God. Obviously Jesus, limited as he evidently was both in knowledge and in power, is not a complete revelation of either the omniscient wisdom or of the omnipotent power of the infinite God. But if God is always and everywhere the kind of person that Jesus was in Galilee nineteen centuries ago, and if he is always working for the purposes for which Jesus was working then, surely all shall be ultimately well with us his obedient children here and hereafter. That this is so, is the age-long affirmation of Christian faith, based on Christian experience. In the beautiful and deep-seeing words of Marcus Dods:

It is Christ who has taught us that to be God is not to be a mighty king enthroned above the reach of his creatures, but that to be God is to have more love than all besides, to be able to make greater sacrifices for the good of all, to have an infinite capacity to humble himself for others. If in Christ we find at last the real nature of God, if we may always expect such faith-

fulness and help from God as we find in Christ, if to be God is to be as full of love in the future as Christ has shown himself in the past, then may not existence yet be that perfect joy our instincts crave, and toward which we are slowly and doubtfully finding our way through all the darkness and distress, the shocks and fears, which are needed to sift what is spiritual in us from what is unworthy.

On this double rock-foundation of Christian experience, essentially as valid for our time as for any other, however much the increase of our historical knowledge and the changes in our philosophical world-view may make necessary a restatement of its theological form of doctrine, rests our abiding Christian faith in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.

But this faith in the incarnation of the infinite God in an individual human life at once involves consequences and presuppositions that are vastly important, not only for our view of Jesus Christ, but for our estimate of ourselves. *Human nature must then be capable of receiving the imprint, of expressing the very spirit, of the character of God.* Jesus himself assumed and implied this when he commanded men to be perfect, "even as your Father in heaven is perfect," thus explicitly setting for human character a divine standard. The older Christologies must then have been on the wrong track when they assumed an essential separation and "great gulf fixed" between the divine nature of God on the one hand and the human nature of men on the other, and then made futile attempts to bridge this gulf with their intricate theories of the union of these two natures in the

incarnate Christ. And the beautiful words of Phillips Brooks, written in his journal, must then be deeply true: "The *possibility* of such supreme manifestation of God in Jesus must lie in the essential nearness of humanity to Divinity. Such revelation in a person could not take place in any person which did not thus naturally belong with God."

And this must be true, not only of human nature in the abstract, but of individual personality in the concrete. If Jesus, a single human personality, could thus become the historic incarnation of the Spirit of the invisible God, then *there is no essential incompatibility between individuality and divinity.* And then the truth of the personality of the infinite God, which must forever remain an insoluble intellectual mystery beyond the reach of our finite minds to grasp, may become, just as is the divinity of Christ, a fact for our Christian faith and in our religious experience.

But even here the spiritual significance of our faith in the incarnation does not stop. *What has been actual in one human life must be possible for all.* The thought of the representative character of Christ, the "Second Adam" and "man from heaven," as the pioneer of a redeemed humanity, on which the New Testament so steadily insists, immediately suggests "that in God's special indwelling in Christ we have the type and pledge of a wider incarnation in a redeemed humanity." If in the historic incarnation in Christ the true relation between God and man is fulfilled, then the historic achievement of this ideal in one life becomes a promise and prophecy to our Christian faith of its ultimate realization, not simply in many

individual lives, but in the social relations and common life which these individuals maintain together. "Thus," in the words of a well-known modern theologian, "the special incarnation in Christ requires as its complement the wider incarnation in humanity; and the life of Jesus remains incomplete till it is contemplated in relation to the larger social ideal whose realization it is designed to promote."

So rich, then, is our spiritual heritage in the doctrine of the incarnation, when we approach it, not in order to debate its adequacy or accuracy as a theological

formula, but to discover its value as a treasury of Christian experience. It summons us as individuals to a deeper experience of the reality and saving power of God, and a clearer discovery of his character, as these are revealed in Jesus Christ. It dignifies our human nature with its evidence of our nearness of kin to "the Father of our spirits." And it heartens us for all our moral struggle and social aspiration, with its promise and prophecy of that final consummation both of our personal and of our common life, in which "God shall be all in all."

THE UNKNOWN GOD

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A college student once said to a distinguished professor of history who had referred to the roads Solomon built: "Do you mean to tell us that Solomon was a real person? I thought he was just somebody in the Bible." That is the way too many persons feel about Paul. To make the apostle real he must be seen in connection with the very real world in which he lived. Mr. Dunn attempts to show in a rather novel fashion Paul's relation to Platonism. His reconstruction of the address of Paul at Athens is, of course, only conjecture, but does it not help us to understand the effect which it had upon thoughtful persons?

The sermon of Paul on Mars Hill has long held a place in the front ranks of examples of forensic oratory; and properly no oratory holds such rank that is not effective, for the object of oratory is to convince, and that which lacks convincing power lacks the essential feature of true oratory. There have been many comments on this effort of Paul, many reflections on its ingenious

method, many on its immediate effects, many on its permanent argumentative force. And yet, when considered in the setting of its known surroundings, it seems singularly inadequate to the results attained.

Paul had just arrived at Athens from Berea. His preaching in Macedonia up to this point had not produced like results. On the contrary, it had evoked